LAMBDA VALLEY

December 1987 | MONTHLY | volume XIX (19) Number 4

Film Reviews

Maurice

by S.A. PRING

Maurice, the latest film from Ismael Merchant and James Ivory, weaves a lush tapestry of British class and morals. Its protagonists, Clive and Maurice, find themselves caught between the 19th Century world of rigidly genteel social expectations and the impending flux of the 20th Century.

World War I cuts through Britain, putting an end to the Victorian age. Social status and sexuality are intricately intertwined.

Maurice (James Wilby), a product of the London bourgeoisie and the son of a deceased stock broker, goes off to university. He attends sherry hours and tutorials, chapel and formal dinners, banters with his young peers and falls in love with Clive (Hugh Grant), a young baron with melancholy dark eyes.

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Vera

by L. VILLAROSA

About halfway through the new Brazilian movie *Vera*, the lead character (Ana Beatriz Nogueria) sheds her 'butch girl' uniform — cuffed jeans, wide-lapel shirt, vest — and dons a three piece suit. She wears both her suit — and her newfound confidence — well. The perfect suitor, Vera appears at the home of Clara (Aida Leiner), a beautiful co-worker who has rebuffed her advances. But she accepts *his*. As a man, or at least dressed as one, Vera (who insists on being called Bauer), wins the affection of Clara's parents, her young son, and eventually Clara herself with a little chivalry and a lot of *chutzpah*.

Written, directed and produced by Sergio Toldeo, *Vera* (in Portugese with subtitles) is more about

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I've Heard the Mermaids Singing

by A. LIEBERMAN

What do you see when you picture a mermaid? A beautiful woman — the most beautiful in the world — swimming, playful and dolphin-like, in an enchanted underwater village. Seaweed trails through her long green hair (I had a lover like that once — green hair all over), and warm water caresses her perfect, sinuous body. Well, half a body. But, literally speaking, mermaids are ineffectual women — incomplete ones. No cunt you know. All that beauty is just an illusion because you can't actually take it.

Polly (Sheila McCarthy), the main character of *I've Heard the Mermaids SInging*, is the quintessential ineffectual woman striving for and

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Parting Glances

by BOB SWEENEY

The fast-lane lifestyles of the Big Apple, a direct and personal confrontation with AIDS, and a relationship in its final stages are the focus of the contemporary New York drama about two gay lovers saying goodbye.

Written and directed by Bill Sherwood, *Parting Glances* centers on Robert and Michael, who's about to leave for Africa (John Bolger and Richard Ganoung respectively). The events that take place as he bids farewell to Robert, New York, and his friends include coming to terms with an ex-lover who has contracted AIDS, an intimate dinner and a festive all night SoHo part with many colorful guests. The real plot of the story is what happens between Michael and Robert as their relationship dissolves. The sometimes off-color humor and

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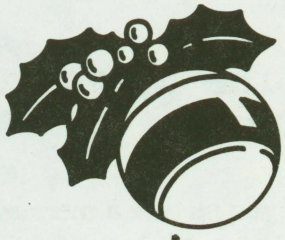

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Court Orders Memory Book Publisher to Include Gays' Photograph

ASSOCIATED PRESS, October 20, 1987

A 10 year high school reunion memory book cannot be printed unless it includes a photograph of a gay alumnus and his lover, a judge has ruled. Orange Country (California) Superior Court Judge Tully Seymour issued the temporary order on October 19th.

'I anticipated from the beginning that this wasn't going to be easy,' said Dan Worthington, the defendent and owner of Worthington Reunion Photographers in Costa Mesa. He vowed to continue the legal fight.

The suit was filed by David Engel, 27, and Eric Underwood, 28, who claimed a photographer at Engel's 10 year high school reunion on August 15 refused to take a picture of them together for a memory book, a small-scale yearbook.

The $85 paid by the couple for the event included a portrait photograph and a copy of the book.

Worthington's attorney, David L. Llewellyn Jr., argued that a court order forcing his client to publish a photograph of both men together was a violation of Worthington's First Amendment Right to determine what to publish.

Engel graduated from University High School in Irvine in 1977, and returned with Underwood for the reunion from New York, where both men are starring on Broadway in the gay farce, *La Cage Aux Folles*.

'We had a week's vacation that we planned around the reunion,' Underwood said. Los Angeles attorney Gloria Allred, who represented the plaintiffs said the ruling means that the state's Unruh Civil Rights Act protects gays against discrimination by private businesses.

'The most basic right that they will enjoy as a result of the decision is the right to human diginity,' Allred said.

MAURICE

continued from page 1

No wonder they fall in love. The hallowed hills of Trinity and King's Colleges are peopled only by the finest examples of English manhood; they translate Greek verse speaking of the special loves between boys. The heathered countryside is the enchanted setting for their physical delight in one another.

But when one of their friends, also a titled gentleman, is sentenced to six months hard labor for attempted buggery, Clive, disturbed and unwilling to risk his name and career as a solicitor (that's Brit for lawyer), runs to Greece for a number of months. He refuses to answer Maurice's impassioned letters. When he returns, he announces his engagement to Ann, whose frizzy dark coif contrasts as much with Maurice's blond hair as her hare-brained 'intuition' does with his subtle intensity. This is a world in which women are the ornaments of respectability — that is, for Clive. For Maurice, they present only an annoying intrusion.

And that's the catch, actually. Clive, as a member of the landed gentry, can retire to his country estate once he is comfortably married — far too much to sacrifice for the merely perfect love. And as Maurice strives to accept this, he, too, comes to face a choice.

Maurice is intriguing and beautiful, slow and graceful, as it moves toward the conclusion. Anglophiles and homophiles alike will love this latest endeavor from Merchant-Ivory Productions.

Maurice At the Ritz Five Theater, 214 Walnut Street, Philadelphia. 925-7900.

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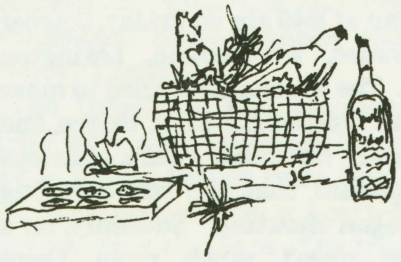

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Woman Beats Up Subway Masher

ASSOCIATED PRESS, October 17,1987

An enraged victim grapped a subway molester by the collar, dragged him off the train and beat his head against a concrete platform at Grand Central Station, a transit spokesman reported.

'She wanted to send a message out to the types of people who engage in this horrendous activity that there are a lot of women who are not going to stand for it,' said the spokesman, Al O'Leary.

The victim, a 27 year old Queens resident whose name was withheld, is about 5 foot six inches tall and of average weight, but described herself as "very large in spirit," said O'Leary.

The incident began at 8:40 am on Friday, October 16, aboard a crowded, southbound, Lexington Avenue No. 4 train. The woman first tried to move away when the man fondled her back, thighs, and buttocks, O'Leary said. But other riders, oblivious to her light, complained that she was crowding them. Then she bagan shouting. 'Suddenly, on a train where there wasn't much room, there seemed to develop space,' as other riders edged away, said O'Leary.

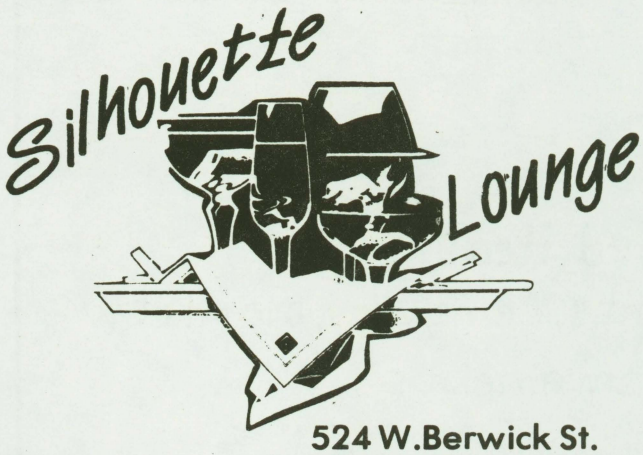
When the train doors opened at Grand Central, she dragged the man off the train, punched him and beat his head against the concrete platform.

As he was being beaten, the suspect apologizes to the victim in a soft voice and then asked a conductor to call police, said O'Leary.

Officer Harvey Jones took both the man and the woman to a transit police office, where the lodged complaints against each other.

Robert Davidosn, 31, of 301 East 64th St., was arrested on a charge of third degree sexual abuse. The woman must appear in court to answer a criminal summons alleging harassment, No witnesses came forward, possibly because 'there aren't a lot of people willing to hang around at 8:40 in the morning,' said O'Leary.

The victim, who had never been victimized by a subway masher before, 'was pretty sure he (the alleged assailant) wouldn't do it again,' said O'Leary.



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MERMAIDS

continued from page 1

thriving on illusory beauty. She's ineffectual in the sense that she is socially incompetent: she orders milk in a Japanese restaurant. She types poorly, daydreams at work and flubs temp jobs so often that the agency she works for warns prospective employers that she's "a bit off." WHen she's in a spot, she reacts like a child, hiding under furniture, rather than doing whatever a self-respecting adult would do in the situation (What, you say you'd hide too? Well, keep it to yourself).

Polly's beautiful, too, in a weird, other-worldly sort of way. And, like a mermaid, she doesn't have sex. Not with men. Not with women. She takes some sneak photos of a teenage couple making out in the woods (a very funny scene) but that's as close as she gets to the heterosexual bedroom community. And when she starts working for the Curator (Paula Baillargeon), she realizes she's getting a crush on the elegant, worldly French woman, but knows herself well enough (or poorly enough?) to say she didn't want any of that kissing stuff. Just, "I loved her."

Her asexuality is, of course, suspect. Too often we have heard about asexual old spinsters in the office — the ones who say they've shared a house with a woman friend for fifty years to save on bills — only to see the spinster and friend dancing cheek to cheek at a woman's bar. Lesbians, especially closeted ones, are often seen as asexual, and perhaps that is why writer/director Patricia Rozema portrays Polly as asexual.

Given that idea, can we explain Polly's later anger toward Curator Gabrielle's lover, Maria (Ann Marie McDonald), as mere sexually jealousy? Mmm, perhaps. But I tend to think the anger is a result of Polly's anger at a fracture in her picture of a lovely and perfect world — a break which Maria inadvertantly causes. Later, when the illusion is restored, the anger is gone.

Really, the whole movie is about creating illusions of beauty, and not at all about lesbianism, which is treated in the film in such a matter of fact way as to be almost deadpan. The Curator collects art; what is art but lovely, illusory representations of the real world? Other characters create art. And there's a certain cynicism: the art world, implies Rozema, is built on a flimsy base, the illusion of expertise, what with so many people pretending that can tell good art from bad. The scenes of art critics anal-yzing paintings with overly-complex, often nonsensical jargon are hilarious and cutting.

Polly, too, creates beauty and illusion. She daydreams marvelous scenes — flying amid skyscrapers, walking on water, listening to mermaids singing. And when she's not daydreaming, she takes thousands of photographs and spends her evenings developing them.

The photos present a paradox. Unlike everything else she does, Polly is good at them. In the end, we see that, with her photographs, she can make the world come alive and give her life meaning. Are photographs illusions? They purport to be real — that's the difference between a snapshot and a painting. Since Polly is an accomplished photographer, is Rozema saying the illusions are more real than we think, or that reality is more illusory than we imagine?

Meanwhile, if Polly is supposed to be a mermaid, what is she doing listening to them sing? Maybe they are drawing her in. The call of the sirens. A call to beauty. Perhaps she's drawing them in. Or bringing us in, toward them.

The film itself isn't nearly this abstract. It's very, very funny. It's also a little unsettling. It's got this weird feeling about it that reminds me of Polly's weird little smile. The movie is short — an hour and a half — and is finely, delicately crafted in a way that makes it seem almost fragile. But then, are all illusions fragile?

I've Heard the Mermaids Singing. At the Ritz Five Theater, 214 Walnut Street, Philadelphia. 925-7900. Also in New York City, and worth the drive. ◙

PARTING GLANCES

continued from page 1

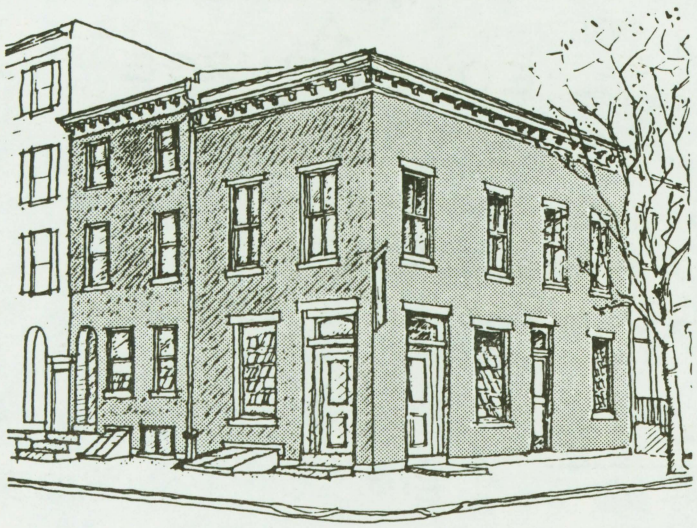
intense acting is superbly carried off by a cast of talented newcomers. With an excellent script, along with the interesting direction, make *Parting Glances* a most entertaining and moving film. It will make you teary eyed one minute and laugh the next.

I liked *Parting Glances* for a host of reasons. The main one being its positive portrayal of the '80's gay male couple. The film refuses to get bogged down with typical male stereotypes or go for the quickie laugh. Its honest and personal account of the AIDS subplot is refreshing without overtaking the film or using cheap melodramatic ploys. Such a serious subject deserves to be treated openly and honestly as Sherwood has accomplished here.

I hope every gay male (sorry ladies) can identify with this film. It will hopefully leave the viewer with good feelings and make you feel proud of who and what we are. It is a different aspect of the homosexual lifestyle, the honest and loving side rather than the flip side as seems to be portrayed in so many other films such as *Cruising* with its sleaze or *Boys in the Band* with its bitterness and dark humor. I don't mean to take away from either film because they accomplished what they were made for and each was a milestone in film-making on the gay theme.

In short, *Parting Glances* is effective, touching, and deeply personal. It works!

John Bolger (Robert) can be seen of late on CBS's *Everything's Relative*, a comedy set in the cosmetics industry on Saturdays at 6:30 pm.



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Desiree

Company is Coming

by DESIREE

Oh dear.

There I was, all curled up in front of the space heater, about to begin an invigorating read of *Murder at the Nightwood Bar* (even *Ms. Magazine* recommended it), when the phone rang. It was Gladys Northsmith, my childhood chum, in town and coming over. I has all of ten minutes to de-dyke the place and for the life of me I couldn't think straight...

Down came the poster of two scantily clas (well, alright, they weren't clad at all) ladies rlling in the pasture (splendor int the grass I call it). Off came "Leaping Lesbians" blaring on the turntable. *On Our Backs* (well thumbed issue that ti be) went under the sofa seat. Thankfully, I remembered to remove my button ("So many women, so little nerve") as I dashed to answer the bell.

Oh dear. Those baby blues were as fatal as ever. I tried to watch my gait (my friend Miriam insists she can spot 'em by their walks) as I not so nonchalantly steered her away from the bookcase (title searches are not to be done off-handedly). We laughed hilariously over old Miss Pitree, and then Gladys asked to see the rest of my humble abode.

The tour was moving right along (though Gladys found it interesting that I kept the peanut butter in the bathroom — I said the steam kept it from getting rancid) when Gladys made a bee-line for my closet. She hadn't seen me move that fast since the time we got caught playing doctor with my little brother, Ben. "Don't open your closet much?" she inquired innocently. I mumbled something about feathers and whisked her out.

As she was leaving, she turned those baby blues on me (I felt my knees go weak) and kissed me goodbye. I watched her saunter off and realized Miriam might be right after all, Gladys sure walks differently these days.

Oh dear. ◙

Researchers Claim Gay Link to Jack the Ripper

PGN, October

Two British authors suggest that there was a homosexual involvement in the five brutal murders committedf by Jack the Ripper in Victorian London.

Although the official Scotland Yard file on the killing and mutilation of five female prostitutes remains sealed, authors Martin Howells and Keith Skinner cited personal correspondance between the Yard's chief of detectives in 1888 and the daughter of Montague John Druitt, the man Howell and Skinner say was Jack the Ripper.

In a book published last week, the authors say that Druitt's connection to the crimes was never made public because he was friendly with many important people, some of whom were gay, including the Duke of Clarence, grandson of Queen Victoria and son of Edward VII. The investigation was closed when Druitt's body was discovered in the Thames River. Howells and Skinner suggest that Druitt was killed by one Henry Francis Wilson, who, they allege, was the lover of the Duke of Clarence from their days as students at Cambridge.

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Highlights of the Month

Jingle bells, jingle bells, fundraise all the way. Oh what funs it is to dance, dance the night away. Where? At the FACT (Fighting AIDS Continuously Together) SnowBall, December 6 at the Americus Center. Cocktails at 6:30 pm, dinner at 7:30.

Dont' miss the encore showing of *Parting Glances*, Thursday, December 10 at 7:30 pm at the Lambda Center, 742 Hamilton Mall, Allentown.

Deck the Lambda Center with boughs of holly at the Lambda Center Christmas Tree Decorating Party, Firday December 18 at 7:30 pm. And don't miss out on the holiday cheer at the annual Winter Solstice Party, Sunday, December 20th at 4:00 pm at the Center.

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